Karl Mannheim and the Crisis of Liberalism: The Secret of These New Times. David Kettler and Volker Meja

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Review
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ceeding, the rhetoric of class is presented on its own terms, its diversity and contradictory impulses allowed to stand uncontested. The historicist and contextualist object of comment on the problem of class in America is thus reduced to revealing how ambivalent Americans were about class and their uncertain usage of the term. This is useful to know, but it truncates discussion at the point that it should begin, implying that in its diversity and contradictory pluralism something designated as *the* American way of seeing class can be found. Like all nations, the United States gave rise to, and continues to generate, a plethora of perspectives on class and social order. Reading these discourses at the interpretive level demands something more than reproducing them and reveling in their rhetorics of difference.

Karl Mannheim and the Crisis of Liberalism: The Secret of These New Times. By David Kettler and Volker Meja. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1995. Pp. x+350. $39.95.

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This work stands as a summa, not of course the "Summa of our age" that Karl Mannheim solicited for his grand narrative of rational planning, but as an integrative synopsis of the authors' lifelong engagement in unraveling Mannheim's paradoxical and shifting intellectual project. Drawing on three decades of close textual study and richly informed by archival work, the book systematizes the authors' retrieval of Mannheim as a quintessential social-liberal, an incorrigible "thought experimentalist," and a twice-exiled outsider who was forced (and volunteered) to strike many a bargain with consecutive audiences in his native Hungary, his adopted Germany, and the England of his destiny. Both opportunity and tragedy mark this nomadic career caught in between geographic locales, theoretical styles, and political options (philosophy vs. sociology, politics vs. science, liberalism vs. conservatism, theory vs. empiricism, essayist vs. systematist). The most pervasive and fateful of these unresolved tensions no doubt issued from Mannheim's double ambition as a political scientist who also desired to be a scientific politician; precariously balancing the ethos of "value-freedom" against the call to politicize (coming both from Hegelian leftists such as Lukàcs and from Hegelian rightists such as Freyer), Mannheim's fate once again illustrates the sheer difficulty, if not impossibility, of successfully straddling the Weberian divide.

Kettler and Meja provide many nuanced insights and sidelights all along this trajectory of multiple negotiation, stretching from Lukàcs's Sunday Circle and the liberal Jászi group in Budapest to the not-so-liberal "Moot" circle in England, from the spectacular Weimar reception of *Ideologie und Utopie* to subtle knowledge-political dealings and Anglo-

Saxon misunderstandings about *Ideology and Utopia*. Throughout, this "public biography with theoretical intent" is consistently but unemphatically informed by a model of agonistic intellectual exchange that, pace Habermas, refuses to draw a categorical line between strategic bargaining and discursive argument, acknowledging the reciprocal play of power and resistance in all learning and highlighting the essentially negotiable and negotiated character of all theoretical influences and settlements. This theory of transactional reciprocity is remarkably resonant, not only with the Foucauldian theme of power/knowledge but also with Callon and Latour's concept of translation, both of which may be seen as radical extensions of Mannheim's critical project but which are conspicuously absent from the present study.

If taken seriously and reflexively, such a model of transactional reading must also apply to the authors' own bargaining with the Mannheimian corpus and to my small attempt to bargain with them over its present-day significance. First of all, Kettler and Meja appear not a little to overstate Mannheim's alleged determination "to carry liberal values forward" and to underestimate the darker side of the Enlightenment mission of sociology to "rationalize the irrational." Their study frequently illustrates the uncanny proximity between Mannheim-style reformist "liberalism" and a quite illiberal authoritarianism, manifest not only in the imperial gesture of a totalizing sociology, but also in enduring longings for a scientifically based and elite-steered social technology. Initially impelled by both Lukàcs and Jászi's cultural elitism, Mannheim's relentless missionary ambition does vary in directional emphasis but not in substance throughout his career; his gradual shift from "dialectics" to "objectivity," from radical "knowledge-political" perspectivism toward a more accommodative "value-free" professionalism, does not mitigate but only intensifies the authoritarian risk that is already not so implicit in his early "standpoint epistemology." Democracy, the authors admit, remained an ambiguous referent for Mannheim and was not highly valued as a goal; indeed, after initially derogating fascism as unworthy myth making and hyperactivism, Mannheim, the victim and exile, soon came to appreciate it as an alternative, although "perverted," planning system and to voice admiration, if not for fascist goals, then at least for fascist successes in achieving total social mobilization.

While signaling this authoritarian undertow, the authors' own liberal rationalism deflects them from digging further into these uncanny proximities with right-wing thought, as exemplified by Freyer's *Ethoswissenschaft* and theory of authoritarian planning, Schmitt's advocacy of totalitarian democracy, and Zehrer's conception of a revolution of the intellectuals. Paradoxically, however, it is the Weimar "knowledge politician" who stands closer to liberal democratic values than the later "English" authoritarian positivist and sociotherapist, even though Mannheim's positivist retreat was precisely designed to abort the risk of total politicization induced by his epistemological closure of the gap between the political and the scientific. If Mannheim presents a piece of

unfinished business to the sociological profession, as the authors rightly surmise, it is this radical Weimar posture regarding the reflexivity and situatedness of all knowledge that must newly be bargained for; it is a radicalism that is presently revitalized across a broad front represented by feminist standpoint epistemology, constructivist science studies, and Bourdieu's reflexive praxeology of culture. If the authors enjoin us to take up the work of critical self-reflection where Mannheim himself was deflected from it, it is here that the next intellectual bargain may be struck.

Virtuosity, Charisma, and Social Order: A Comparative Sociological Study of Monasticism in Theravada Buddhism and Medieval Catholicism. By Ilana Freidrich Silber. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. x+250. $54.95.

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Two of the enduring challenges within Weberian scholarship have been to fill in the only cursory remarks Max Weber made on medieval Christianity and to reconcile the "rise of the East" with Weber's traditional depiction of Western exceptionalism. Ilana Silber's comparative study of medieval monasticism in Buddhist Southeast Asia and Catholic Western Europe meets both challenges.

Through comparison and contrast, Silber traces how, in each of the cases, the particular development of monasticism and its pattern of material and symbolic exchange with the larger society evolved under the impact of the major cultural-ideological and social-institutional characteristics of the civilizational context. In the case of medieval Catholicism, the ideological content of the Christian doctrine and the form of institutionalization of monasticism meant that the social and cultural prestige of religious virtuosi was readily translated into social power. Christian monasticism had a considerable capacity for institution building, developed an autonomy vis-à-vis external political powers and the laity, and led to a diffusion of ascetic spirituality into other sectors of society. However, it tended to be unstable in its social position and its pattern of interaction with the larger society. In the case of Theravada Buddhism, on the other hand, the ideological content of the Buddhist doctrine and the form of institutionalization of monasticism lead to a greater disjunction between social and cultural prestige and social power. The Buddhist Sangha (the community of ascetics), while less structured and less autonomous than Catholic monasticism, had a social position and pattern of interaction with other sectors of society that was more structured and permanent. While ascetic spirituality remained confined to the Sangha, the Catholic monasticism maintained the cultural centrality of otherworldly symbolic orientations in an enduring way.